



PHOTO BY PENNY RANDALL / THE MERIDIAN STAR

WHY DO YOU DISPLAY A YELLOW RIBBON?

Renee Weiler of Meridian adjusts the yellow ribbon she proudly displays on the back of her vehicle. Weiler displays the ribbon in honor of her son-in-law, Cecil Crawford, who lives in Marion with his wife, Jill, and their three children. Cecil is a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 185th Aviation Group Company G at Key Field. He is currently stationed in Iraq and is expected home in March. "He is so loyal to his men and his country," Weiler said. "I'm so proud of him."



PHOTO BY PAULA MERRITT / THE MERIDIAN STAR

RILEY NURSE

Tommy Alford, a registered nurse in Riley Hospital's Emergency Department, checks on patient Kendarius Heidelberg while his mother, Santerio, sits nearby.

Thank you for ...

Tommy Alford, a registered nurse in Riley Hospital's Emergency Department, was asked, "If you could talk to a military person serving overseas, what would you tell them?" This poem is his answer.

Thank you for leaving your home
so that we can live in ours.

Thank you for leaving your family
so that we can be with ours.

Thank you for leaving your jobs
and security so that we can be
secure as we work.

Thank you for traveling
dangerous highways so that we
can travel ours safely.

Thank you for leaving
your place of worship so that
we may worship as we choose.

Thank you for giving up your
personal freedoms so that
we may be free.

What you do each day is helping
to guarantee that we can do
what we choose for our life.

Forgive us for taking our freedom
for granted. We know that our
freedom is being paid for by men
and women like you.

God bless you and
God bless America!

— Tommy Alford

Citizen soldier

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long-sleeved uniforms, members of her unit had to wear 45 pounds of body armor.

"There was plenty of water there, considering it was the desert, and we were lucky enough to be housed in real buildings instead of tents," Mayberry said.

"The abundance of fighting and violence brought on by the Iraqis was the worst."

A terrible experience

Even though they were at war, Mayberry's unit found time for spiritual morale. They had church services with a choir, and Mayberry was the lead singer.

One time during choir practice a rocket hit a building next to them and damaged eight of the buildings they used for housing.

"Compared to my trip to Afghanistan, this was terrible," Mayberry said.

"It was one of the worst experiences of my life, but I realized that this was my job and that's what I had signed up to do. This experience was one I don't want to, and hopefully won't have to, go through again. I'll never forget it."

A strong, determined young woman who hasn't neglected her education or her patriotic duty, Mayberry is a shining example of an outstanding American. Mayberry now holds the rank of staff sergeant and lives in Shuqualak, with her newly wed husband, Christopher Jamatiel Mayberry.

"Lest us remember all the troops that are overseas fighting for us," Mayberry said.

"Keep them in your prayers and hearts. Thank God that I'm back home safe and again at EMCC. I hope all our troops will be home soon, and may God keep them safe."

Read a letter home to Meridian from

The "Cradle of Civilization"

in the Industry and Commerce section.